

CRE - Legends of Ancient World Hannibal

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John Brown



Legends of the Ancient World: Hannibal

By Charles River Editors



Hannibal. (Napoli, National Museum.)

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Introduction



Depiction of Hannibal

Hannibal (247-182 B.C.)

“God has given to man no sharper spur to victory than contempt of death.” – Hannibal

A lot of ink has been spilled covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' Legends of the Ancient World series, readers can get caught up to speed on the lives of antiquity's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute, while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

In the history of war, only a select few men always make the list of greatest generals. Napoleon. Caesar. Alexander. They are always joined by Hannibal, who has the distinction of being the only man who nearly brought Rome to its knees before its decline almost 700 years later. Rome never suffered a more horrifying defeat in its history

than at Cannae, and indeed, Hannibal nearly rewrote the course of Western history during the Second Punic War. Even today there remains great debate on just how he accomplished his masterful invasion of Italy across the Alps. Since his army included war elephants, historians still argue over exactly where and how he crossed over 2,000 years after he managed that incredible feat.

Hannibal will always be listed among history's greatest generals, and his military campaign in Italy during the Second Punic War will always be studied, but part of the aura and mystique surrounding the Carthaginian legend is that there is still a lot of mystery. Since Carthage was destroyed by Rome a generation after Hannibal, most of what is known about Hannibal came from the very people he tormented in the late 2nd century B.C., and thus much of his background and life story is unknown. Moreover, while military historians are still amazed that he was able to maintain his army in Italy near Rome for nearly 15 years, scholars are still puzzled over some of his decisions, including why he never attempted to march on Rome in the first place.

Legends of the Ancient World: Hannibal looks at the life of the Carthaginian hero, explores some of the mysteries and myths surrounding his life and campaigns, and analyzes his legacy, which has remained strong over 2,000 years after his death and promises to last many more. You will learn about Hannibal like you never have before, in no time at all.



Depiction of Hannibal crossing the Alps

Chapter 1: Early Life and Military Distinction, 247-218 B.C.

The classical age has given us some of History's greatest generals. The battles, tactics and campaigns of the likes of Alcibiades, Alexander, Caesar and Lysander are still studied at staff colleges and military academies throughout the world today, long after military equipment and doctrine have far outstripped those of their period, and with good reason. For speed of march, efficiency of supply and logistics, and sheer battlefield acumen, they are in many ways unmatched today, and there is no doubt that even among such exalted company Hannibal of Carthage, son of Hamilcar, stood supreme. In a little over two decades of near-continuous warfare, the man who would become known as the Scourge of Rome would come within a hair's breadth of destroying the mightiest empire of his age, almost altering the course of history forever.

Most of what the histories have to say about Hannibal came to us from his greatest enemies, for shortly after his death Carthage was utterly annihilated by the Roman legions, and they left no annals behind to tell us what the Carthaginians may have thought of their greatest soldier. That said, it is known that Hannibal was disliked by many of the most prominent Carthaginian factions, who were always loath to support him even in the hour of his greatest success, but their dislike was nothing compared to the utter hatred – largely born of fear – that the Romans felt for him. They could not belittle his achievements, so they attacked the only thing that was open to question – his character. Roman historians named him arrogant, ruthless, vicious, hedonistic, and cruel, and though some of his actions do bear out these labels, others seem to contradict them entirely.

Thus, a fine controversy has raged over the years, with some historians arguing that Hannibal's character was beyond reproach, like his generalship, while others argue that he was everything his Roman detractors suggested, and more. The truth, as always, is likely to lie somewhere in the middle. Like many classical figures on whom much has been written, but almost always second-hand, Hannibal remains something of a mystery. He never left any personal documents behind, or if he did they did not survive antiquity, so today we are left to confine ourselves to examining his public persona and his achievements, and catching the occasional glimpse of the man behind the mask.

Hannibal was born in Carthage in 247 BC, the first-born son of Hamilcar "The Thunderbolt" Barca, a prominent Carthaginian nobleman and a successful general who had distinguished himself

leading Carthage's forces during the First Punic War against Rome ("Punic" being the adjective the Romans reserved for all things Carthaginian). Though Hamilcar used the cognomen Barca (meaning "thunderbolt"), it's unclear whether that was passed down to his sons, though historians still generally refer to Hannibal as Hannibal Barca. Regardless, with such a fine martial tradition in his family, it naturally followed that Hannibal too would join the Carthaginian army, rather than engage in the other great pastime of the city's nobility, trade.

With the state of the Mediterranean basin being what it was in 247 BC, it followed that there would be plenty of employment for soldiers. Indeed, Hannibal was born into a world of strife. Carthage, the northern African superpower, had grown rich on trade and the intelligent use of force, but their position of supremacy was being challenged by the rising star of Rome, which by this time was also aggressive, expansionistic, and heavily slanted towards conquest and the military rather than peaceable trade. Given that, it was inevitable that Rome would come into conflict with Carthage, and had already done so during the first Punic War, a brutal and bitter conflict which had lasted for over two decades and resulted in a Roman victory and the loss of large swaths of Carthaginian land across the Mediterranean. While the two great powers were at war, other factions, such as Syracuse and the Seleukids, had also attempted to carve out a larger piece of the Mediterranean pie.

Carthage's struggles with Rome in the first Punic War, and their overreliance on mercenary forces, had left them so bankrupt they were unable to pay off their surviving veterans, leading to widespread uprisings by their mercenary contingents that turned into a war in their own right. This further impoverished Carthage and caused the loss of even more territories as they were forced to scrape the barrel of their manpower dry to crush the rebellions. Rome, however, was in no position to take full advantage of Carthage's weakness: 23 years of war had virtually annihilated her army and navy, and both factions needed time to draw breath, re-arm, and levy new armies and taxes. It was in this uncertain time, the breathless calm before the inevitable storm, that Hannibal grew to boyhood.

When Hannibal was 11, and proceeding with the typical education of a Carthaginian military nobleman's child (by all accounts he excelled at horsemanship, wrestling, and other martial pursuits), his father Hamilcar, who was desperate to find Carthage a new source of revenue to replace the lost territories of Sardinia and Corsica, managed to persuade the Carthaginian ruling elite of the desirability of the military conquest of the Iberian peninsula, the riches of which,

he argued, could fund Carthage's re-armament for the next war. The Carthaginian rulers consented, and in 236 B.C. Hamilcar went about preparing the invasion of Spain, which at the time was a loose collection of tribes with no ambitions beyond their local territory. Furthermore, annexation of land on the Iberian Peninsula was unlikely to anger Rome unduly, even though the Republic's forces were also pursuing their own interests in the north of the Peninsula. In fact, containment of Roman expansion may also have been part of Hamilcar's strategy.

Hannibal, though barely 11 at the time, begged his father for leave to accompany the expedition. At first, it appears as though Hamilcar was reluctant to let someone so young join him on his campaign, but due to repeated pleas by Hannibal, he seems to have relented. Whatever his reasons, the young Hannibal was certainly with the Carthaginian army when it marched along the coast of North Africa to the strait of Gibraltar, where, under Hamilcar's supervision, the troops were ferried across the narrow strait and onto Spanish soil. The journey took Hamilcar's army some months, but at the time the Carthaginian navy was in such a parlous state that there were simply not enough ships available to transport the army by sea from Carthage itself, leading Hamilcar to take the longer coastal route.

Once there, however, Hamilcar's army was vastly successful in prosecuting war on the peninsula itself. The Iberian tribes, inferior in equipment and training, could not hope to resist the Carthaginian troops, and despite stiff fighting they were defeated piecemeal and annexed, a process which, though relatively rapid, nonetheless took several years. During this time, Hannibal grew to adolescence, tutored in warfare by Greek instructors who instructed him by detailing the conquests of Alexander, Alcibiades, and Pyrrhus of Epirus, all of whom he would come to greatly admire and hold in high esteem. Of course, Hannibal also witnessed his father Hamilcar's successes as a commander first-hand. It is likely that Hamilcar himself, when campaign matters permitted, would have taken time to instruct his son himself, for they appear to have been close. Indeed, Hamilcar was determined that Hannibal himself, when the time came, should take up his mantle and proceed with the crusade that had occupied most of his military life: the destruction of Rome. Hamilcar had never recovered from the humiliation of being defeated by the Republic's forces, and longed for the day when he might lead Carthage's troops against Rome once again, and to this end he spent much time instilling in his son an implacable hatred of Carthage's sworn enemy. Such was Hamilcar's zeal for his cause, and his desire to bind his son to it, that he had Hannibal accompany him to a shrine in the town of

Peniscola (near modern Valencia) and bid him swear upon the altar that he would be Rome's enemy for evermore. Hannibal duly did so, adding, "As soon as I have come of age, I swear that I will bring Rome low by fire and the sword".

Hamilcar's campaigns continued successfully, and he even began to consolidate his gains by founding a string of cities, including, popular legend has it, the port city of Barcino (from Barca, his family name), on the site of modern-day Barcelona. However, Hamilcar's success came to an abrupt end in 228 B.C. when, leading his army across a river against an army of Iberian tribesmen, he fell from his horse and, dragged down by his armour, drowned. Hannibal was 19 at the time, and already a proven battlefield commander, having taken command of a detachment of Carthaginian troops at some point during Hamilcar's campaigns and already displaying a glimmer of the military genius that would characterise his later career in his handling of his soldiers.

Hannibal grieved deeply for his father's death, but his sorrow was somewhat lessened by the appointment of his older brother-in-law, general Hasdrubal, to overall command of the army. Having another family member commanding in Iberia, rather than an unknown quantity, meant more opportunity for advancement, and Hannibal was pleased to accept a position on Hasdrubal's staff, where he had ample opportunity to prove his mettle. Meanwhile, Hasdrubal, who was less bellicose than Hamilcar, set about consolidating his father-in-law's gains, pursuing a policy of appeasement and settlement in the territories that Hamilcar had already annexed. After all, the main purpose of the Iberian invasion had been to generate revenue, and there could be no tax collecting while there was a war raging. Accordingly, Hasdrubal, much to Hannibal's chagrin, signed a peace treaty with Rome and established a *de facto* frontier along the northern valley of the Ebro, with both factions promising they would refrain from straying across the river. Quite what Hannibal made of Hasdrubal's decision to sign a peace treaty with his and his father's sworn enemy is unclear, but he cannot have been pleased by the fact. Nevertheless, like a good soldier, he obeyed, and he was given cause to rejoice when, in 226 BC, an alliance was formed between the Carthaginians and the Gaulish tribes of the Po valley in Northern Italy, tribesmen hostile to Rome who had already once memorably sacked the great city itself. Rome responded, and in 225 B.C. they annexed the area known as Cisalpine Gaul, dashing Hannibal's hopes of a joint invasion of Italian soil.

It was around this time that Hannibal, then in his early twenties,

took to wife the Iberian princess Imilce, the daughter of a powerful tribal leader. As part of his successful – and highly remunerative – policy of consolidation, Hasdrubal had insisted that many of his young, unmarried officers take local highborn ladies of marriageable age to wife, and Hannibal's marriage seems to have been born of that policy rather than any particular passion he might have felt for Imilce. Hannibal continued in Hasdrubal's employ for several years, firmly establishing himself as one of the most resourceful Carthaginian commanders in Iberia, until, in 221 BC, his brother-in-law was murdered. Hasdrubal was killed by a Celt assassin, but who paid the cut-throat's purse is likely to remain a mystery. Certainly there were plenty of people who wanted him dead: the Iberians he had pacified had cause to dislike him, the Romans might well have viewed him as a significant obstacle to their interests in Iberia, and they were doubtless feeling threatened by the possibility of a Gaulish-Carthaginian invasion of the Italian peninsula; moreover, the Carthaginian court itself was notorious for intrigue and political plotting, so there is a distinct possibility that it was someone in Carthage who wanted Hasdrubal dead, for their own ends.

Be it as it may, Hasdrubal's death was a golden opportunity for Hannibal. He had already proven himself to be a resourceful commander, and in addition to his undoubted merits he had the good fortune to be the child of the mighty Hamilcar Barca. By 221 B.C., Hannibal also had proven himself to be his father's son militarily. When the time came for the army of Iberia to choose its commander, he was named general to universal popular acclaim, and his appointment was promptly validated by Carthage.

At the age of 26, Hannibal was now commander of the entirety of the Carthaginian forces in Iberia, with but one objective: to bring fire and the sword to Rome.

Chapter 2: The Scourge of Rome, 218-216 B.C.

For two years, Hannibal bided his time, consolidating his position in the Iberian peninsula and massing his forces, abiding by one of the greatest military truths and one which doubtless his tutors and his father, with their tales of Alexander and Alcibiades, had contributed to instill in him: numbers do not matter so much as concentration of force, i.e. what troops are available to fight in one single critical location, at any given time. Meanwhile, even as Hannibal was preparing to strike out against their very heart, the Romans seem to have grown unusually complacent; after all, Hannibal was new to overall command, and with both Hamilcar and Hasdrubal dead, they must have felt themselves secure. When in 218 BC Hannibal resurrected his brother-in-law's plan for a joint Gaulish and Carthaginian invasion of the Italian peninsula, the Romans were caught napping, something which they would live to regret in the following years.

Hannibal needed a *casus belli*, and in 219 B.C. the Romans obliged him with one, forming an alliance with the powerful Iberian city of Saguntum, well south of the line drawn along the Ebro, and unilaterally declaring it a Roman protectorate. Hannibal took this for outright rebellion, and acted accordingly, investing the city and besieging it for eight months until it fell. He then protested to Carthage that Rome had broken the terms of their agreement with them, declaring that there could be only one feasible course of action: war. The Carthaginian rulers, having been burned once before, were wary of becoming embroiled in a new conflict with Rome, but such was Hannibal's popularity with the troops in the Iberian peninsula that, with the memory of the Mercenary Wars still fresh in their minds, they acceded to his demands rather than risk a full-blown mutiny.

In the spring of 218 B.C., at the head of approximately 50,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry, and 50 war elephants, Hannibal began marching northeast. His plan was breathtakingly ambitious: he would march through the Pyrenees, across southern Gaul, over the Alps and into Italy proper, thereby avoiding the heavily fortified border in the northwest of Italy. It was a route no general had ever taken before, let alone a general with so many animals (including elephants). His father Hamilcar had been defeated trying to invade southern Italy and attempting to outfight the Roman navy at sea; Hannibal would not make the same mistake.

Pushing aside with contemptuous ease the stiff resistance of the

Pyrenean tribes, who contested every step of the way from their strongholds of the mountain passes, Hannibal pushed forwards with remarkable speed, leaving behind a detachment of some 10,000 Iberian soldiers to keep his lines of communication open and pacify the tumultuous region. He then marched on into southern Gaul, negotiating with the local chieftains and outfighting those who had a mind to contest his advance. His speed of maneuver, and his ability to move his army across rough terrain, proved unmatched in the ancient world since the time of Alexander the Great. By that point, his army, which now numbered some 40,000 infantry, 8,000 cavalry, and around 40 war elephants, danced up the valley of the Rhone to evade a Roman force sent to bar his passage southwards through the strategically vital gap in the mountains where the Alps meet the Mediterranean. With that route closed to him, Hannibal, undaunted, struck south and east across the Alps themselves.

Exactly what route he took is still the subject of hotly contested debate today, and even Roman scholars writing shortly after his prodigious feat seem to have no clear idea of where precisely he made his passage, but one thing is certain: it was one of the most remarkable maneuvers in military history. There were no roads greater than a goat-track across the Alps, none of them continuous, and the high passes were smothered by snow, often year-round, with drifts dozens of feet deep. Moreover, those passes included other hazards, such as potential rockfalls, and the barren terrain offered limited supplies. To top it all off, these passes were crawling with bellicose tribesmen who lived by banditry and hid in impregnable fortresses perched atop sheer crags. To Hannibal's army, most of them Iberians from the sun-baked plains of southern Spain or Carthaginians from the hot deserts of Northern Africa, the Alps must have looked like an icy Hell.

Hannibal's passage of the Alps remains the most famous event of his life and legend, and even though the location of his crossing matters little compared to the fact that he ultimately did get across, it has nonetheless been the most compelling mystery of his life for over 2,000 years. Even ancient historians were intrigued and tried to figure out the answer. The well known ancient Greek historian Polybius mentioned that Hannibal's men came into conflict with a Celtic tribe, the Allobroges, which was situated near the northern part of the range along the banks of the river Isère. The famous Roman historian Livy, writing over 150 years after Polybius, claimed Hannibal took a southerly route.

It is believed that both historians used the same source, a soldier in

Hannibal's army, Sosylus of Lacedaemon, who wrote a history of the Second Punic War. Geographers and historians have pointed to the 6 most likely mountain passes that could have actually been used and then tried to narrow it down by finding one that seems to match the descriptions of both Livy and Polybius. A handful of historians used those accounts to theorize that Hannibal crossed the Alps at the **Col du Montgenèvre** pass, which would have been in the southern part of the range near northwest Italy. That also happened to be one of the better known road passes in the ancient world, and it was used often for diplomacy.

Wherever the crossing, and despite the innumerable difficulties, Hannibal got across. He reached the rolling foothills of Northern Italy several months later, at the head of 20,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, and a mere handful of war elephants (the great beasts having fared none too well, as was to be expected, in the mountain passes). If figures relating to his troop numbers before and after his celebrated crossing are to be believed, only half of the men Hannibal marched into the Alps marched back out again, and Hannibal must have known that no supply convoys could ever hope to cross where his army had passed. Nor, with the Roman navy's supremacy in the Mediterranean, could he have much hope of resupply or retreat by sea. Like Caesar would do nearly 170 years later crossing the Rubicon, Hannibal had cast the die. He and his men were left with no choice but victory or death.



Depiction of Hannibal's men crossing the Alps

Costly as it was, Hannibal's choice to cross the Alps was not done so for vainglorious reasons. By appearing suddenly in Northern Italy, crossing terrain that was reckoned to be impassable, Hannibal took the Romans completely by surprise, and the main Roman army that had been mobilised to fight Hannibal was caught completely wrong-footed. When news of Hannibal's appearance reached its commander, Publius Scipio (father of the redoubtable Scipio Africanus, who would cross swords with Hannibal himself in the years to come), he was in the process of pushing his men across the Pyrenees and into Iberia. He quickly loaded his rearguard onto ships, sailed across to Italy, and hurried to intercept Hannibal by forced march.

Scipio engaged Hannibal's forces at Ticinus, but he could only hope to fight a delaying action with the limited troops at his disposal. Hannibal's celebrated Numidian cavalry routed Scipio's forces, and would have killed Scipio himself had it not been for Scipio Africanus's timely rescue. Emboldened by this Roman defeat, the Gauls of the Po

valley rose in revolt, sending a large force (around 20,000 men) to join Hannibal's army. Hannibal then marched his force south of Scipio's main base at Placentia, on the Trebia river, cutting him off from the support of Consul Sempronius Longus, who was marching up from southern Italy to come to his aid and bring Hannibal to battle. However, when the provisions promised to his army by the Cisalpine Gauls failed to materialize, Hannibal was forced to abandon his tactically superior position to capture the supply depots at Clastidium, allowing Longus and Scipio to join their forces near the Trebia.

Although the Roman Senate was now hurriedly raising legions in Rome, and two powerful Roman armies had joined together, Hannibal apparently remained unfazed. He promptly marched on the Roman camp on the Trebia, making a show of force and inviting Scipio and Longus to attack him. The two Roman generals obliged, throwing their celebrated infantry across the Trebia in order to attack Hannibal's forces, arrayed on the bluffs above the river. Exhausted by their river crossing, the Roman troops became entangled in a bloody melee with Hannibal's infantry, fighting each other to a standstill until Hannibal unveiled his master stroke. Concealed from the Roman infantry by the terrain until the last moment, his light infantry and cavalry stormed into the Roman flanks, enveloped the entire force and, trapping the legions with their backs to the river, annihilated them. It was a crushing victory for Hannibal, and a disaster for Rome. It would be the first of many.

By this point, the campaigning season, which traditionally stopped during the winter months, was virtually over. Hannibal decided to winter his troops in Cisalpine Gaul, but he quickly wore out his welcome there. Possibly because the Gauls were displeased at how Hannibal had used their levies to grind down the Roman forces, the supplies they provided were stilted and ungenerous. In early spring, Hannibal decided to find himself a more secure base and made ready to carry the war into Italy proper. However, despite the winter lull, the Romans had not been idle. Two consular armies, under consuls Servilius and Flaminius, had marched at the beginning of the new year to block Hannibal's routes to the south and east, fortifying their positions there and effectively immuring him within northern Italy. A normal general would have thought himself trapped. Hannibal, however, had a plan. To the south lay the Apennines Mountains and the huge swampy delta of the Arno river, in modern Tuscany, an area reckoned impassable by any army.

Hannibal must have reckoned that after what he had faced in the Alps, he and his men were ready for any challenge. After a brief pause

for consideration, he ordered his army to march for the Arno. The Apennines were less of a challenge than the Alps had been, and Hannibal's forces made decent enough time as they crossed through them, but Hannibal himself suffered a debilitating injury, losing an eye to a virulent infection (believed to be conjunctivitis) that kept him bedridden for a spell. His army then descended into the basin of the Arno, but the going was far harder than even Hannibal could have anticipated. The entire region was a festering swamp, with not a single scrap of dry, solid land for his men and horses to sleep on. Hannibal quickly realised he had marched his men into a death-trap. With no choice but to push on, he and his men marched uninterruptedly for four days and three nights, in water and mud that often came up to their waists, with no rest except what they could snatch on their feet. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of Hannibal's men perished on the march. Some were drowned, others were swallowed by quicksand, others contracted malaria or dysentery from drinking the swampy water, and still more simply died of exhaustion. By the end of the march, Hannibal had lost the last of his war elephants, as well as virtually all of his supplies and wheeled transport, but he was now in Etruria, Roman heartland, with both Flaminius and Servilius to the north of him.

As Polybius noted in his account, Hannibal had reached an important crossroad in his campaign. As Polybius wrote, "[Hannibal] calculated that, if he passed the camp and made a descent into the district beyond, Flaminius (partly for fear of popular reproach and partly of personal irritation) would be unable to endure watching passively the devastation of the country but would spontaneously follow him...and give him opportunities for attack." Hannibal needed to bring Flaminius to battle, to avoid the danger of having a large enemy force to his rear, but he found Flaminius too passive to give him the battle he sought.

In order to persuade the Consul – who had a healthy fear of his abilities – to take to the field against him, Hannibal set about ravaging the surrounding Etrurian countryside, sacking towns, burning markets and generally wreaking havoc in the hope that Flaminius would become so incensed that he would be forced to defend the Italian heartland, or that a direct order should arrive from Rome ordering him to do so. Hannibal, though his military strategy was sound, was not as strong in his political choices as he was in battle: by devastating Etruria, he lost support among the local people, whom he might otherwise have been able to lure away from their alliance to Rome. Moreover, despite Hannibal's best efforts, Flaminius stubbornly stayed put in his defensive position. Frustrated by the Roman general's

supineness, Hannibal marched around Flaminius's flank and cut him off from Rome, the kind of turning movement in warfare that was rarely used in the ancient world but became standard fare (and often the ultimate strategic goal) over the next 2,000 years. Even with such a massive threat to his lines of supply and communication, Flaminius still refused to march, so Hannibal turned and marched southwards. This time, with the Senate demanding what exactly he was playing at, Flaminius had no choice but to chase him.

Flaminius marched his 30,000 men after Hannibal, but the Carthaginian forces outstripped him. Desperate to bring the enemy to battle, Flaminius pushed recklessly onwards without scouting his line of advance, a mistake which was to cost him dear. On the northern edge of Lake Trasimene, Flaminius marched his army through a narrow defile and onto a small plain that was ringed by wooded mountains, through which his trackers reported Hannibal had marched some time previously. It was only when the last of the Roman forces had marched through the defile that Hannibal swung the jaws of his trap shut: his cavalry rushed forward from concealed positions to close the only gap through which Flaminius's force could retreat, and then his entire army poured howling out of the woods and fell onto the Romans before they had the chance to take up battle positions. In the ensuing desperate melee, virtually the entire Roman army was wiped out: 15,000 or more, including Flaminius himself, were killed, cut down in the melee or drowned in the lake trying to swim to safety. Around 5,000 more Roman soldiers were captured, and the remainder scattered into the hills. In one masterful stroke, Hannibal had disposed of the last field army in Northern Italy, successfully executing antiquity's greatest ambush. Rome herself was now at his mercy.

Chapter 3: Rome's Darkest Hour, 216 BC-203 B.C.

Hannibal was now in an ideal position to strike at Rome, but he chose not to do so. If he ever had any siege artillery in his baggage train (no mention is made of it in the original sources) then he lost it in the Alps or in the swamps of the Arno, because he had none available to invest Rome, nor, apparently, the engineering expertise either among his Carthaginian troops or his Gaulish levies to manufacture any. Without siege engines, he could still have chosen to ring the city with earthworks and lay siege to it, but instead he decided to march into Southern Italy, where he hoped to incite revolt among Rome's subject states.



Statue of Fabius Maximus

The Romans, desperate for something, anything, to rid themselves of this Carthaginian Nemesis, appointed General Fabius Maximus as Dictator, an extraordinary measure which was only undertaken in times of the greatest crisis. Maximus, who had a healthy respect for Hannibal's generalship and was painfully aware of what had befallen Roman armies in pitched battles against him, now developed the "Fabian Strategy", which focused on indirect, attritional warfare. This strategy called for relying on skirmishes, ambushes, and dilatory tactics to harass, undermine and frighten Hannibal's forces, avoiding pitched battle which would almost certainly have proven ruinous. Though Maximus's tactics were effective, this indirect mode of warfare was considered dishonourable, even cowardly, by many

Romans, who derisively nicknamed him “Cunctator” (“The Delayer”).

Frustrated by Maximus’s tactics, Hannibal took out his spite by ravaging the country estates and cities of the Apulian region before making his way into Campania, one of the most important agrarian regions in Italy because of its vast fertile plains that produced harvests crucial to feeding the great masses of Rome. Even the threat to the Campanian exports failed to draw Maximus into open battle, but Hannibal was so overzealous in his harrowing of Campania that, he soon realised, come the winter his army would have nothing to live off. Accordingly, he decided to march back to Apulia, but found his path blocked by a number of different Roman contingents that Maximus had placed at crucial passes to bar his way back. Hannibal responded with customary brilliance, by feinting his entire army at a thickly wooded hill, suggesting he was going to march through the forest and ignore the pass, and when the Roman army repositioned to attempt to bar his way, promptly marched his men about and through the pass they had so obligingly left unguarded, a tactical master-stroke which so damaged Maximus’s already tarnished reputation as a commander that he was forced to step down as Dictator. As British historian Adrian Goldsworthy noted, the maneuver was "a classic of ancient generalship, finding its way into nearly every historical narrative of the war and being used by later military manuals".

Hannibal spent the winter comfortably ensconced in Apulia, raiding the region to procure supplies for his army and making overtures to the Macedonians, the city-states of Syracuse, and many other erstwhile allies of Rome. He needed their help in the hopes they would provide him with men and supplies which were desperately needed since Carthage stubbornly refused to support him. Despite his successes, Hannibal was not particularly politically beloved at home, with many believing he was being too rash in provoking Rome. Frustrated, Hannibal resumed the campaigning season in the spring of 216 B.C. by capturing the city of Cannae, a crucial supply hub, and placing himself along the line that convoys from the ports and warehouses of the south needed to travel to reach Rome. This was something the Romans could not and did not take lying down. Rome raised the largest army in their city’s history, a force of between 80,000 and 100,000 men, and marched south with Consuls Varro and Paullus at the head of the army. This military behemoth disregarded the delaying tactics that Maximus had favored, fully determined to destroy Hannibal once and for all as quickly as possible. Polybius described the unprecedented nature of this Roman army: “The Senate determined to bring eight legions into the field, which had never been done at Rome before, each legion consisting of five thousand men

besides allies. ...Most of their wars are decided by one consul and two legions, with their quota of allies; and they rarely employ all four at one time and on one service. But on this occasion, so great was the alarm and terror of what would happen, they resolved to bring not only four but eight legions into the field."

Despite the massive horde headed his way, Hannibal was ready for them. He encamped his army near the Aufidus, a river not far from Cannae, and waited. His intelligence told him that Consul Varro, the more influential of the two Roman generals, was a firebrand, talented in attack but with a tendency to overreach himself, and Hannibal resolved to use this flaw to his advantage. Hannibal arrayed his army in the open, sure that Varro would be unable to resist the temptation to offer battle, and then deliberately placed his weakest infantry in the center of his battle-line. Varro led the Roman legions straight at the centre of Hannibal's formation, proceeding in characteristic bull-headed fashion and spearheading the assault himself. Hannibal's troops in the center yielded before the legions, as Hannibal had anticipated, sucking the bulk of the Roman force deep into the centre of Hannibal's formation. Meanwhile, the wings of Hannibal's infantry automatically swung against the flanks of the Roman force while Hannibal's cavalry, led by his celebrated general Maharbal, crushed the Roman cavalry and light infantry deployed to protect the formation's flanks and rear and, in so doing, succeeded in encircling it completely. The Roman force now found itself unable to run or maneuver, completely surrounded by Hannibal's forces. It was one of the earliest examples of the pincer movement in the history of warfare.

It was a massacre, one of the most vicious battles in the history of the world. Around 75% of the Roman army was cut down in the ensuing melee, which would be in the vicinity of between 50,000-80,000 soldiers depending on which initial estimates are considered to be accurate. Among the casualties was the luckless Consul Paullus, two-thirds of the city's Military Tribunes, a host of officials and noblemen from the most prominent Roman families, and almost a full third of the Senate. Hannibal's army killed so many prominent Romans that his men collected more than 200 gold signets from dead Romans, and he had the rings sent to Carthage to demonstrate his complete victory.

Livy described the scene, "So many thousands of Romans were dying ... Some, whom their wounds, pinched by the morning cold, had roused, as they were rising up, covered with blood, from the midst of the heaps of slain, were overpowered by the enemy. Some were found

with their heads plunged into the earth, which they had excavated; having thus, as it appeared, made pits for themselves, and having suffocated themselves." If the casualty numbers are accurate, Hannibal's army slaughtered an average of 600 Roman soldiers every minute until nightfall ended the battle, and less than 15,000 Roman troops escaped, which required cutting their way through the center of Hannibal's army and fleeing to the nearby town of Canusium.

Cannae is still considered one of the greatest tactical victories in the history of warfare. As military historian Theodore Dodge described, "Few battles of ancient times are more marked by ability...than the battle of Cannae. The position was such as to place every advantage on Hannibal's side. The manner in which the far from perfect Hispanic and Gallic foot was advanced in a wedge in *échelon*... was first held there and then withdrawn step by step, until it had reached the converse position... is a simple masterpiece of battle tactics. The advance at the proper moment of the African infantry, and its wheel right and left upon the flanks of the disordered and crowded Roman legionaries, is far beyond praise. The whole battle, from the Carthaginian standpoint, is a consummate piece of art, having no superior, few equal, examples in the history of war."

Furthermore, the fact Cannae was a complete victory with the wholesale annihilation of the enemy army made it the textbook example for military commanders to try to duplicate, usually, of course, without success. Cannae was the kind of annihilation that every commander from Caesar to Frederick the Great to Napoleon to Robert E. Lee sought, and that few save Caesar and Napoleon bagged whole armies is a testament as to the near impossibility of achieving a victory like Cannae.

The Battle of Cannae was an unqualified disaster for Rome, unprecedented in the annals of the city, and one with consequences which echoed around the Mediterranean. The Syracusans and Macedonians, now believing that Rome's star was on the wane, abandoned their alliances with the Republic and sided instead with Hannibal. With yet another Roman army decimated, Rome was again at Hannibal's mercy, as Livy noted: "Never before, while the City itself was still safe, had there been such excitement and panic within its walls. I shall not attempt to describe it, nor will I weaken the reality by going into details... it was not wound upon wound but multiplied disaster that was now announced. For according to the reports two consular armies and two consuls were lost; there was no longer any Roman camp, any general, any single soldier in existence; Apulia, Samnium, almost the whole of Italy lay at Hannibal's feet. Certainly

there is no other nation that would not have succumbed beneath such a weight of calamity.”

In just 20 months, Hannibal had destroyed 3 Roman armies, totaling about 16 legions and upwards of 150,000-200,000 men, and it is estimated that Rome had lost 20% of its adult men. Once again, however, Hannibal inexplicably wavered and opted not to attack Rome itself. Though he still lacked siege equipment, there would almost certainly have been someone among his allies with expertise in siege warfare, but Hannibal refused to march north, choosing instead to stay in southern Italy. Much of the blame for Hannibal’s supineness, in this case, remains with the Carthaginian oligarchy, who once again refused to provide him with money, reinforcements, or the siege equipment he so vitally needed. According to legend, after Cannae the Numidian cavalry commander Maharbal suggested that Hannibal march on Rome. When Hannibal resisted, Maharbal was alleged to have said, "Truly the Gods have not bestowed all things upon the same person. Thou knowest indeed, Hannibal, how to conquer, but thou knowest not how to make use of your victory."

Whether Hannibal made the right decision or not, he could certainly have exerted himself a little more. In the event, he chose to capture several cities in southern Italy, and established his headquarters in Capua, one of the richest cities in Southern Italy, which had defected to his side after Cannae, as had much of the southern part of the Italian Peninsula. Hannibal’s lassitude during this period, referred to by classical scholars as the “lazings of Capua”, is uncharacteristic, but it allowed the Romans to rally. Hannibal contented himself to send a peace delegation to negotiate terms with Rome, but the Senate still refused to deal with Hannibal. Instead, Rome re-dedicated itself to raising more armies and fighting Hannibal.

In the wake of the catastrophe at Cannae, the Roman ruling elite re-evaluated Fabius Maximus’s strategy, and began to use his tactics to harass, delay, and whittle down Hannibal’s forces in the field, studiously avoiding open battle whenever they could. For years they harried Hannibal’s armies, and while there were blunders that allowed Hannibal to lash out (three Roman armies were destroyed in the period between 215 and 212 B.C.) the victories were minor and ultimately meaningless. After almost half a decade of continuous warfare, Apulia was a scorched desert incapable of sustaining an army in the field, and Hannibal was getting no supplies either from his allies or from Carthage. Moreover, his allies were proving to be hopelessly ineffective in the field, meaning he either had to lead the force himself or risk losing one of his field armies. Whenever Hannibal

did take command, the results were often devastating for Rome, but decisive victory eluded him. Rome could raise far more troops than Hannibal, unsupported, could ever hope to obtain, and a war of attrition was destined to favor them in the end. The tide was finally turning against Hannibal.

In 211, Hannibal received a massive blow as, while his army was in the field, the Romans besieged and captured, with great loss, his base at Capua. Still reeling from this news, his woes were compounded when he discovered that his Syracusan allies had also been crushed, with Sicily fallen to the Romans, and Philip, the king of Macedon, also defeated and driven out of the Roman dominions. Hannibal himself continued to prove himself a great general, inflicting several notable defeats upon all the armies sent against him, but they were, in the long term, meaningless. He fought on, but continued to lose territories throughout 210 and 209 B.C., and between 208 and 207 B.C. he was pushed ever southwards, finally being forced to retire to Apulia, where he anxiously awaited reinforcements under the command of his brother, Hasdrubal. At the eleventh hour, these reinforcements might have turned the tide, for once he had the troops at his command Hannibal planned to march upon Rome once and for all. However, Hasdrubal never reached Hannibal. He got himself entangled in a battle with the Romans on the Metaurus, and his army was defeated and he himself killed. Hannibal, knowing his situation in Apulia was untenable, was forced to retreat into Bruttium, the southernmost tip of the Italian peninsula, where he was also forced to endure the horror of having his brother's severed head tossed over the walls and into his camp.

For all intents and purposes, Hannibal's campaign in Italy was over. He succeeded in holding on in Bruttium for a further four years, but was never able to push northward and his army was fast dwindling to nothing, with his veterans being killed off and his mercenaries melting away. In 206 B.C., it was reported to him that Roman armies had occupied the entirety of Iberia, driving the Carthaginian forces from the peninsula, a victory obtained by his old enemy Scipio Africanus, who had utterly crushed the Carthaginians at Ilipa. Finally, in 203 B.C., he was peremptorily recalled to Carthage, 15 years and scores of victories after he had first entered Italy in arms. The reason for his recall was simple: Rome was on the march. A massive army, under the command of Scipio "Africanus", the General whose bravery had saved his eponymous father's life at the beginning of Hannibal's Italian campaign, was preparing to attack and destroy Carthage. Rome wanted revenge.



Hannibal, with the rings of the Roman Equestrians he had killed in the battle of Cannae, resting on a Roman standard.

Chapter 4: Rome's Revenge, 203–183 B.C.

While Hannibal had been in Italy, it had been relatively easy for the Carthaginian oligarchy, particularly the Hundred and Four, a federation of powerful traders, and Hannibal's chief political rival, Hanno the Great, to marginalize him. For years his political party, the Barcids, had struggled to obtain even a token amount of funds and troops for his enterprise, but Hannibal's arrival on the scene changed all that. Even his rivals could not deny the simple fact that, all else aside, the man could fight a battle like no other general alive. With Rome threatening invasion, Hannibal was suddenly the necessary hero of the hour. Bolstering his Italian mercenaries with levies from Africa and Carthage, the Carthaginian ruling elite desperately invested the money that Hannibal had begged for throughout the last decade in order to assemble a scratch force capable of at least presenting an appearance of force against Scipio Africanus's army.

Hannibal can hardly have been thrilled to see the amount of trouble the Carthaginians went to in order to assemble an army that, had he had his way years before, might well have been completely unnecessary. Certainly it appears that he prepared to take the field with less than his customary ardor. At 45, he was still far from old, but ever since he had first left Carthage he had spent virtually all of his adult life fighting, and the strain was beginning to tell. By all accounts he was in poor health, and prone to sickness. Indeed, rather than seek to bring Scipio Africanus to battle, in 202 B.C. Hannibal met the Roman general and attempted to talk peace. The army the Carthaginians had succeeded in gathering, not to mention the presence of Hannibal himself, convinced Scipio that he might be well-advised to seek a diplomatic solution, and the two began negotiations, which were helped by the fact that both generals recognized a kindred spirit in the other. Through negotiations, Carthage was forced to give up much, especially considering Hannibal's roster of victories, but Rome's star was on the rise once again, and Hannibal knew he could not hope to win a protracted war.

Hannibal agreed to Scipio's terms: Carthage would lose possession of Iberia and the Mediterranean islands, renouncing all claims to overseas territories but maintaining its heartland and African possessions, with the exception of the Numidian kingdom of Masinissa, who had declared for Rome. Reparations would be made, Scipio demanded, to Rome itself and to the countless families which Carthage's wars had decimated, and the Carthaginian army and fleet must both be reduced in numbers, in order for them to never again threaten Rome's supremacy. Hannibal, who recognised these terms,

though harsh, as probably the best deal Carthage was likely to achieve, acceded to them, but the proposed peace between he and Scipio never happened. While the negotiations were going on, a Roman fleet which had gotten itself stranded upon the coast of Tunisia was seized by the Carthaginian navy and ransacked of all its supplies and equipment. When Scipio heard of this, he furiously demanded reparations, but, unaccountably, the Carthaginian oligarchy high-handedly turned him down. Perhaps they felt secure enough with Hannibal at the head of an army on Carthaginian soil to defy Rome, or perhaps the terms of the treaty stung their pride. Whatever their reasons, they could not have committed a bigger diplomatic error if they had gone out of their way to do so. Scipio departed the negotiations in a rage. There would be no terms.



Engraving of the Battle of Zama

On October 19th, 202 BC, on the plain of Zama, in modern Tunisia, battle was joined. Scipio Africanus led 34,000 Roman legionary infantry, including veteran survivors of Cannae, who had a score to settle with Hannibal, and 9,000 crack Numidian cavalry (the same heavy horse which Hannibal's general Maharbal had used to such devastating effect against the Romans for two decades). Hannibal himself marched to stop him with 45,000 Italian, Iberian, Gaulish and North African infantry (both mercenary and levied), 4,000 cavalry, and around 80 war elephants. For the first time in one of the battles of the Second Punic War, Hannibal had the infantry advantage and Rome had the cavalry advantage.

Hannibal deployed his cavalry on the wings, then placed three lines

of infantry, with his Italian veterans in reserve, behind his war elephants, which were to be his secret weapon. Scipio countered by placing his own infantry in three lines, with his veteran heavy infantry in reserve and his own cavalry, which outnumbered Hannibal's by more than two to one, on the flanks. Hannibal opened the battle by pushing forward his war elephants and light infantry, but Scipio checked their advance before they could smash into his battle-lines by unleashing a cloud of skirmishers who harried the elephants with storms of arrows and javelins, while the Roman cavalry blew trumpets to confuse and frighten the elephants, several of which turned the way they had come and charged into the Carthaginian left flank, creating chaos there. Scipio also intentionally opened gaps in his own line for the elephants to drive through harmlessly. Masinissa took advantage of this to charge home against the cavalry on that flank and drive it from the field, but he found himself embroiled in a chase orchestrated on the fly by Hannibal as the Carthaginian cavalry lured him away from the main battle.

Meanwhile, the Roman and Carthaginian infantry were hammering each other in the center of the battle-line, with both sides momentarily gaining the advantage, only to be driven back in turn. The battle raged for hours, with neither side able to gain the upper hand, but eventually Masinissa, who had chased the Carthaginian cavalry clean off the field with his superior numbers, returned and charged the Carthaginian forces from behind, enveloping them. Scipio rallied his faltering and exhausted troops to one last great effort and they fell upon the Carthaginian troops, which were trapped and unable to maneuver.

Like Hannibal's masterpiece at Cannae, but this time with the roles inverted, the encircled force had nowhere to run. Thousands were cut down where they stood, with only around a tenth of Hannibal's original force, including Hannibal himself, succeeding in breaking free and escaping. For Carthage, the battle was an utter catastrophe, with over 20,000 dead and 20,000 taken prisoner, most of which were grievously wounded. Hannibal's first defeat was so dire that he lost all credibility in Carthage, and his enemies used it to blacken his reputation and forced him to surrender his generalship. With no army in the field, Carthage sued for peace, at far more costly terms than those which they could have accepted with no further loss of life.

Now that Carthage had surrendered virtually all military ambition, Hannibal himself devoted himself to politics. He secured his election to chief magistrate through the support of the Barcid party and introduced highly successful political and financial reforms, much to

the chagrin of his rivals. Hannibal was so successful as a politician that Carthage, despite still being hampered by a heavy war indemnity, prospered to the point that the Romans demanded he step down as magistrate. Rather than do so, Hannibal voluntarily went into exile, worried he might expose Carthage to new Roman reprisals.

For the next eight years he was received as a mercenary commander at many middle-eastern courts, particularly at the court of Antiochus of Syria, in Ephesus, who was preparing for an invasion of Italy. Hannibal, ever conscious of his oath to his father, offered to take command of Antiochus's troops, but Antiochus declined the offer and was soundly beaten the following year. Antiochus, seeking a scapegoat, blamed Hannibal and proposed to sell him to the Romans, prompting him to move yet again. Strabo and Plutarch both wrote that Hannibal spent some time at the court of Artaxias I, and he eventually made his way back to Asia Minor and fought with Prusias I of Bithynia against King Eumenes II of Pergamon, a Roman ally. It was said that during one naval battle, Hannibal devised the idea of filling large pots with venomous snakes and throwing them onto the enemies' ships, wreaking havoc. After Hannibal defeated Eumenes in a couple of land battles, Rome demanded that Bythinia surrender Hannibal to them. The frightened Prusias complied, but Hannibal was determined not to let himself be taken alive and poisoned himself at Lybissa, in Asia Minor, in 183 B.C. Roman historians speculated he had long carried the poison in a ring in case he needed to use it in battle, but poison kept that long might very well no longer be effective. In any case, Hannibal left a letter behind which dryly remarked that his death should provide some comfort to the Romans by relieving them of the fear they had felt for so long, since they apparently could not abide waiting patiently for an old man to die. "Let us relieve the Romans from the anxiety they have so long experienced, since they think it tries their patience too much to wait for an old man's death."

Chapter 5: Hannibal's Legacy

What to make, then, of Hannibal? Certainly, despite the smattering of defeats he accumulated later on in his career, he was one of the most brilliant generals in ancient history, peerless save for, perhaps, Alexander and Caesar. Yet, as his general Maharbal famously remarked, Hannibal seemed to know how to win a battle, but not how to completely capitalize off of it. Half a dozen times during the course of his Italian campaign he could have marched on Rome and perhaps ended the war with a Carthaginian victory, but for various reasons he chose not to do so. Much of the blame for these decisions lies with the indecisiveness of the Carthaginian oligarchy, but Hannibal must bear his own portion of responsibility.

Nevertheless, despite these perceived failings, Hannibal was truly a figure which, even as he lived, was larger than life. His decades of relentless anti-Roman warfare transformed him into a monster in their eyes, with virtually no Roman family who could claim that they had not lost a family member to Hannibal's forces. It is telling that no matter how badly Hannibal defeated the Romans, they despised him so greatly that the Senate refused to negotiate with him, even from a position of great weakness. Hannibal was Rome's bogeyman, their nemesis, and long after his time, whenever Rome faced a disaster, Roman Senators would describe the disaster as "*Hannibal ante portas*" ("Hannibal before the Gates").

It is perhaps the greatest testament to his generalship and his character that the Romans themselves, his sworn enemies for most of his life, erected a statue of him in their Forum, making clear that they considered their victory in the Second Punic War Rome's greatest accomplishment to date. The greatest boast a Roman soldier could make, even in defeat, was "I fought against Hannibal".

Military Legacy

Of course, Hannibal's legacy extended far beyond personality and psychology. There is a universal consensus that Hannibal was one of the greatest generals in history, and arguably the greatest. During the American Civil War, the Lincoln Administration was greatly concerned about General William Tecumseh Sherman cutting his supply lines and marching through enemy territory without any lines of communication for three months. Hannibal's armies stayed in Italy without Carthage's help for the better part of two decades. In the 1911 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Maximilian Otto Bismarck Caspari described Hannibal thusly:

“As to the transcendent military genius of Hannibal there cannot be two opinions. The man who for fifteen years could hold his ground in a hostile country against several powerful armies and a succession of able generals must have been a commander and a tactician of supreme capacity. In the use of strategies and ambushades he certainly surpassed all other generals of antiquity. Wonderful as his achievements were, we must marvel the more when we take into account the grudging support he received from Carthage. As his veterans melted away, he had to organize fresh levies on the spot. We never hear of a mutiny in his army, composed though it was of North Africans, Iberians and Gauls. Again, all we know of him comes for the most part from hostile sources. The Romans feared and hated him so much that they could not do him justice. Livy speaks of his great qualities, but he adds that his vices were equally great, among which he singles out his more than Punic perfidy and an inhuman cruelty. For the first there would seem to be no further justification than that he was consummately skillful in the use of ambushades. For the latter there is, we believe, no more ground than that at certain crises he acted in the general spirit of ancient warfare. Sometimes he contrasts most favorably with his enemy. No such brutality stains his name as that perpetrated by Claudius Nero on the vanquished Hasdrubal. Polybius merely says that he was accused of cruelty by the Romans and of avarice by the Carthaginians. He had indeed bitter enemies, and his life was one continuous struggle against destiny. For steadfastness of purpose, for organizing capacity and a mastery of military science he has perhaps never had an equal.”

Whether Hannibal is the greatest general ever or merely one of the greatest makes for a good armchair debate, but regardless of his ranking, his influence on military tactics is undeniable. In particular, Hannibal demonstrated that warfare was about more than superior tactics in battle; Hannibal's success owed as much to his strategic outmaneuvering of his enemies. As historian Theodore Dodge notes, “Hannibal excelled as a tactician. No battle in history is a finer sample of tactics than Cannae. But he was yet greater in logistics and strategy. No captain ever marched to and fro among so many armies of troops superior to his own numbers and material as fearlessly and skillfully as he. No man ever held his own so long or so ably against such odds. Constantly overmatched by better soldiers, led by generals always respectable, often of great ability, he yet defied all their efforts to

drive him from Italy, for half a generation. Excepting in the case of Alexander, and some few isolated instances, all wars up to the Second Punic War, had been decided largely, if not entirely, by battle-tactics. Strategic ability had been comprehended only on a minor scale. Armies had marched towards each other, had fought in parallel order, and the conqueror had imposed terms on his opponent. Any variation from this rule consisted in ambushes or other stratagems. That war could be waged by avoiding in lieu of seeking battle; that the results of a victory could be earned by attacks upon the enemy's communications, by flank-maneuvers, by seizing positions from which safely to threaten him in case he moved, and by other devices of strategy, was not understood..."

Hannibal has always had his share of admirers in the centuries that followed, from Schlieffen to George Patton, but once again the greatest tribute to his ultimate military legacy was paid by Ancient Rome. Understanding Hannibal better than anyone, Rome completely adjusted the way it conducted war after the Battle of Cannae, At Cannae, the Roman infantry used the phalanx formation popularized by the Ancient Greeks, but that massed formation proved incapable of maneuvering once enveloped in Hannibal's pincer assault. Moreover, the Romans had their high command alternate between two consuls at the head of the army, which made for a poor and confusing line of chain of command. After Cannae, Rome reorganized their units to that they could mass together like a traditional phalanx but retain independent maneuverability by splitting into columns. Rome also did away with their binary leadership command structure and began relying on more professional forces instead of citizen armies.

The effect these changes had on Rome's destiny cannot be understated. Rome turned itself into the greatest military machine on the planet over the next several centuries, and having one consul at the head of legions instead of two created army loyalties to the consul in command, instead of Rome itself. This of course laid the groundwork for the civil wars that ultimately led to Caesar's destruction of the Roman Republic and the implementation of the Roman Empire. Thus, ironically, it was another of antiquity's greatest generals, Julius Caesar, who fulfilled Hannibal's goal of destroying the Roman Republic, as a result of Roman changes made in response to the carnage Hannibal inflicted upon them.

Certainly Hannibal would have relished that as his ultimate legacy.

Bibliography

Readers interested in learning more about Hannibal's remarkable life should refer to the ancient sources of Livy, Polybius, and Juvenal. Those looking for a more modern take on the Carthaginian general can consult the following excellent books:

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